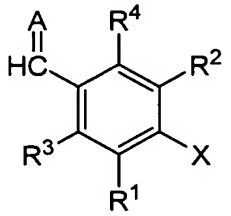
IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) A hair dye composition comprising a dissociative direct dye represented by the following formula (1):

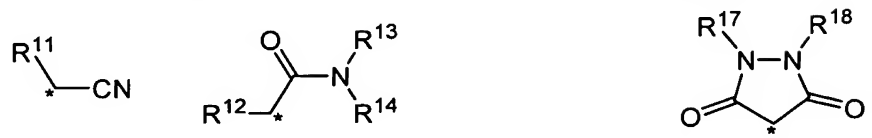



(1)

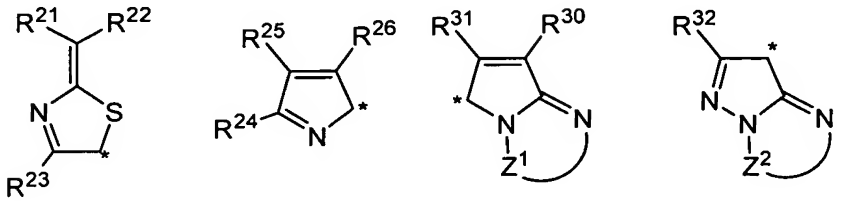
wherein, $R^1$, $R^2$, $R^3$ and $R^4$ each independently represents a hydrogen atom or a substituent, and X represents a hydroxyl group or $-NHSO_2R^5$, in which $R^5$ represents an alkyl, aryl or heterocyclic group, with the proviso that each of the groups may have one or more substituents; and A represents a divalent group capable of forming a methine dye as a whole compound together with the portion other than A

wherein A in the dissociative direct dye (1) is a group represented by any one of the following formulas (Cp-1), (Cp-2) and (Cp-4) through (Cp-11):

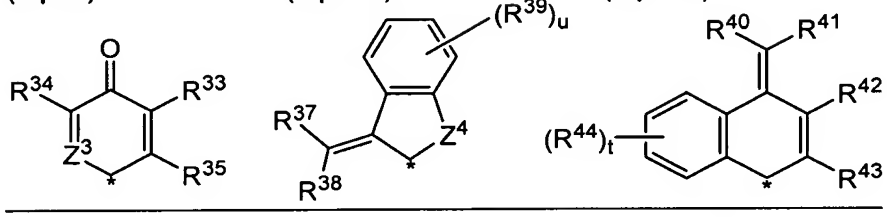
(Cp-1) (Cp-2) (Cp-4)



(Cp-5) (Cp-6) (Cp-7) (Cp-8)



(Cp-9) (Cp-10) (Cp-11)



in formulas (Cp-1), (Cp-2) and (Cp-4) through (Cp-11), * is a position bonding to the benzylidene group in formula (1),

in formula (Cp-1), $R^{11}$ represents a cyano group, acyl group, aryl group, heterocyclic group or group $-C(R^{101})=C(R^{102})-R^{103}$, in which $R^{101}$, $R^{102}$ and $R^{103}$ each independently represents a hydrogen atom or a substituent with the proviso that at least one of $R^{102}$ and $R^{103}$ is an electron attracting group having a Hammett σp value of 0.1 or greater,

in formula (Cp-2), $R^{12}$ represents a cyano, acyl, alkoxycarbonyl, carbamoyl, aryl or heterocyclic group, and $R^{13}$ and $R^{14}$ each independently represents a hydrogen atom or an alkyl, aryl or heterocyclic group,

in formula (Cp-4), $R^{17}$ and $R^{18}$ each independently represents a hydrogen atom or an alkyl, aryl or heterocyclic group,

in formula (Cp-5), $R^{21}$ and $R^{22}$ each independently represents a cyano, carbamoyl, alkoxycarbonyl, alkylsulfonyl or arylsulfonyl group, and $R^{23}$ represents a hydrogen atom or an alkyl, aryl or heterocyclic group,

in formula (Cp-6), $R^{24}$, $R^{25}$ and $R^{26}$ each independently represents a hydrogen atom or a substituent,

in formula (Cp-7), $R^{30}$ and $R^{31}$ each independently represents a hydrogen atom or a substituent, and $Z^1$ represents an atomic group necessary for the formation of a 5- or 6-membered ring together with N-C=N,

in formula (Cp-8), $R^{32}$ represents a hydrogen atom or a substituent, and $Z^2$ represents an atomic group necessary for the formation of a 5- or 6-membered ring together with N-C=N,

in formula (Cp-9), $R^{33}$, $R^{34}$ and $R^{35}$ each independently represents a hydrogen atom or a substituent, $Z^3$ represents a nitrogen atom or $-C(R^{36})=$, $R^{36}$ representing a hydrogen atom or a substituent, with the proviso that when $Z^3$ represents $-C(R^{36})=$, $R^{34}$ and $R^{36}$ may be coupled to form a 5-membered or 6-membered ring,

in formula (Cp-10), $R^{37}$ and $R^{38}$ each independently represents a cyano, carbamoyl, alkoxycarbonyl, alkylsulfonyl or arylsulfonyl group, $R^{39}$ represents a hydrogen atom or a substituent, u stands for an integer of from 0 to 4, and $Z^4$ represents $-SO_2-$ or -SO-, and

in formula (Cp-11), $R^{40}$ and $R^{41}$ each independently represents a cyano, carbamoyl, alkoxycarbonyl, alkylsulfonyl or arylsulfonyl group, $R^{42}$, $R^{43}$ and $R^{44}$ each independently represents a hydrogen atom or a substituent, and t stands for an integer of from 0 to 4, with the proviso that the above-described groups may have one or more substituents).

2. (Canceled)

3. (Original) A hair dye composition of Claim 1, wherein $R^1$ and $R^2$ in the dissociative direct dye (1) are each a hydrogen or halogen atom, or an alkyl, cyano, acylamino, ureido, alkoxycarbonylamino, aryloxycarbonylamino, sulfamoylamino, alkylsulfonylamino, arylsulfonylamino, alkoxycarbonyl, sulfamoyl or carbamoyl group.

4. (Original) A hair dye composition of Claim 1, wherein $R^3$ and $R^4$ in the dissociative direct dye (1) are each a hydrogen atom, a halogen atom, or an alkyl or acylamino group which may be substituted.

5. (Original) A hair dye composition of Claim 1, wherein X in the dissociative direct dye (1) is a hydroxyl group or $-NHSO_2R^5$, in which $R^5$ is an alkyl group which may be substituted.

6. (Currently Amended) A hair dye composition of Claim ~~2~~ 1, wherein A in the dissociative direct dye (1) is a group (which may have one or more substituents) selected from the groups represented by:

formula (Cp-1) in which $R^{11}$ is a cyano group, acyl group, heterocyclic group or group $-C(R^{101})=C(R^{102})-R^{103}$,

formula (Cp-2) in which $R^{12}$ is a cyano group, aryl group or heterocyclic group and $R^{13}$ and $R^{14}$ are each a hydrogen atom, alkyl group or aryl group, with the proviso that at least one of $R^{13}$ and $R^{14}$ represents a hydrogen atom,

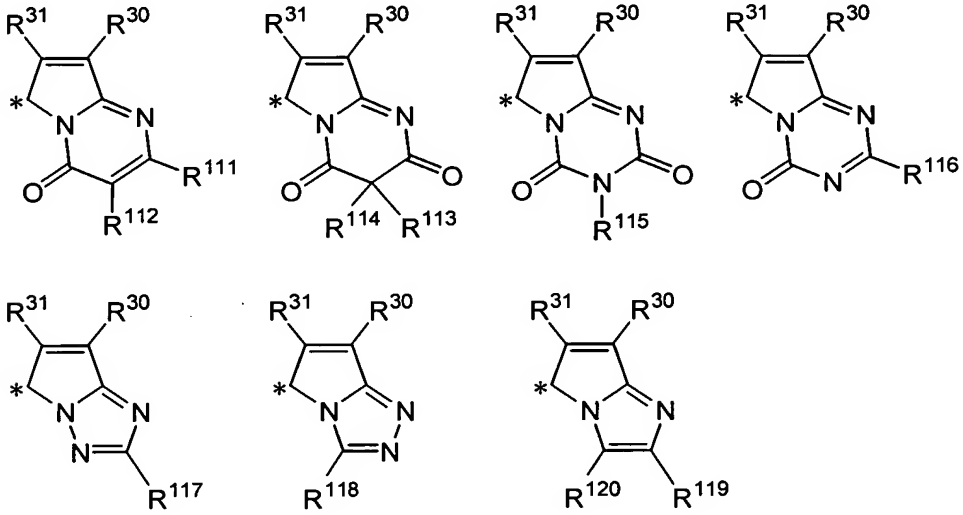
~~formula (Cp-3) in which $R^{15}$ is an alkyl, amino, alkylamino, arylamino, heterocyclic amino, alkoxy, acylamino, alkoxycarbonylamino, ureido, alkoxycarbonyl, carbamoyl or cyano group, and $R^{16}$ is an aryl or heterocyclic group,~~

formula (Cp-4) in which $R^{17}$ and $R^{18}$ are each an alkyl or aryl group,

formula (Cp-5) in which $R^{21}$ and $R^{22}$ are each a cyano, carbamoyl or alkoxycarbonyl group, and $R^{23}$ is a hydrogen atom, alkyl group or alkyl group,

formula (Cp-6) in which $R^{24}$ is a hydrogen atom or an aryl, acylamino, alkylsulfonylamino or arylsulfonylamino group, and $R^{25}$ and $R^{26}$ are each a hydrogen atom or an aryl, alkoxycarbonyl, carbamoyl, alkylsulfonyl, arylsulfonyl or cyano group,

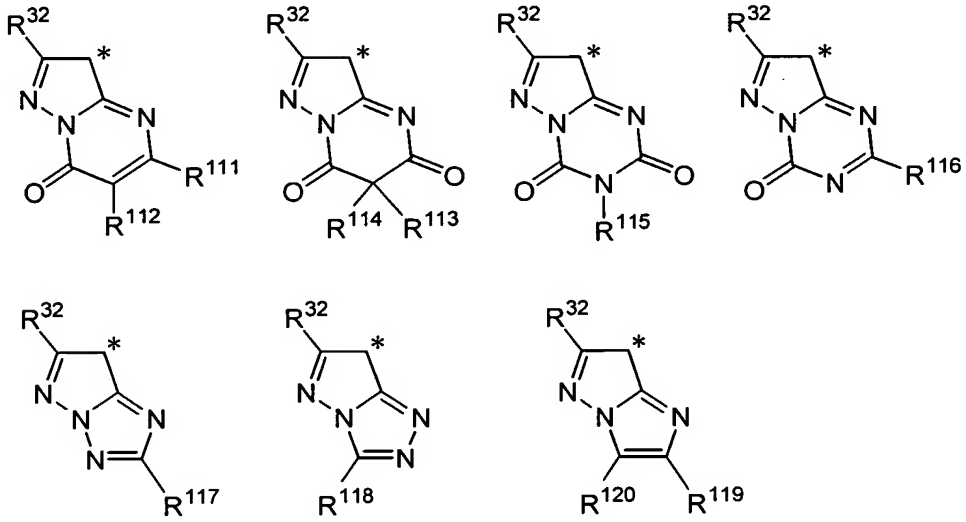
formula (Cp-7) in which $R^{30}$ and $R^{31}$ are each a hydrogen atom or an alkyl, aryl, heterocyclic, alkoxycarbonyl, carbamoyl, alkylsulfonyl, arylsulfonyl or cyano group, and $Z^1$ is a group capable of forming the following ring systems:



wherein, $R^{111}$ represents a hydrogen atom or an alkoxy, amino, alkylamino, arylamino, heterocyclic amino, acylamino, ureido, alkoxycarbonylamino, aryloxycarbonylamino, sulfamoylamino, alkylsulfonylamino, arylsulfonylamino, alkylthio, arylthio or heterocyclic thio group, $R^{112}$ represents a hydrogen or halogen atom, or an alkyl, acyl, carbamoyl or alkoxycarbonyl group, $R^{113}$ and $R^{114}$ each independently represents a hydrogen atom or an alkyl group, $R^{115}$ represents a hydrogen atom or an alkyl group, and $R^{116}$ represents a hydrogen atom or an alkyl, aryl, alkoxy, aryloxy, amino, alkylamino, arylamino, heterocyclic amino, acylamino, ureido, alkoxycarbonylamino, alkylsulfonylamino, arylsulfonylamino, alkylthio or arylthio group, $R^{117}$ and $R^{118}$ each independently represents a

hydrogen atom or an alkyl, aryl or heterocyclic group, and $R^{119}$ and $R^{120}$ each independently represents a hydrogen atom or an alkyl, aryl, heterocyclic, acyl, alkoxycarbonyl or carbamoyl group or they may be coupled together to form a benzene ring,

formula (Cp-8) in which $R^{32}$ is a hydrogen atom or an alkyl, aryl, heterocyclic, alkoxycarbonyl, carbamoyl, alkylsulfonyl, arylsulfonyl or cyano group, and $Z^2$ is a group capable of forming the following ring systems:



in which, $R^{111}$ to $R^{120}$ have the same meanings as described above,

formula (Cp-9) in which $Z^3$ is $-C(R^{36})=$, $R^{36}$ represents a hydrogen atom or an acylamino group, $R^{33}$ and $R^{34}$ are each a hydrogen atom, a halogen atom, an alkyl group or acylamino group, and $R^{35}$ is a hydrogen atom or an alkyl group; or in which $Z^3$ is $-C(R^{36})=$, and $R^{34}$ and $R^{36}$ are coupled together to form a benzene ring which may be substituted with a halogen atom or an amino, alkylamino, arylamino, heterocyclic amino, acylamino, ureido, alkoxycarbonylamino, alkylsulfonylamino or arylsulfonylamino group,

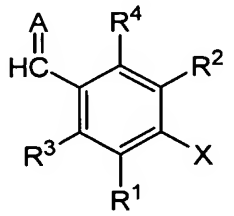
formula (Cp-10) in which $R^{37}$ and $R^{38}$ are a cyano or alkoxycarbonyl group, $R^{39}$ is a hydrogen or halogen atom or an alkyl, aryl, alkoxy, aryloxy, amino, alkylamino, arylamino, heterocyclic amino, acylamino, ureido, alkoxycarbonylamino, alkylsulfonylamino,

arylsulfonylamino, alkylthio or arylthio group, u is an integer of from 0 to 2, and $Z^4$ is $-SO_2-$, and

formula (Cp-11) in which $R^{40}$ and $R^{41}$ are each a cyano or alkoxycarbonyl group, and $R^{42}$, $R^{43}$ and $R^{44}$ are each a hydrogen or halogen atom or an alkyl, aryl, alkoxy, aryloxy, amino, acylamino, ureido, alkoxycarbonylamino, alkylsulfonylamino, arylsulfonylamino, alkylthio or arylthio group.

7. (Currently Amended) A hair dye composition of Claim ~~2~~ 1 or 6, wherein A in the dissociative direct dye (1) is a group represented by formula (Cp-1), (Cp-2), ~~(Cp-3),~~ (Cp-4) or (Cp-8).

8. (New) A hair dye composition comprising a dissociative direct dye represented by the following formula (1):

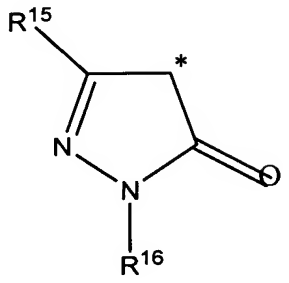



(1)

wherein, $R^1$, $R^2$, $R^3$ and $R^4$ each independently represents a hydrogen atom or a substituent, and X represents a hydroxyl group or $-NHSO_2R^5$, in which $R^5$ represents an alkyl, aryl or heterocyclic group, with the proviso that each of the groups may have one or more substituents; and A represents a divalent group capable of forming a methine dye as a whole compound together with the portion other than A,

wherein A in the dissociative direct dye (1) is a group represented by the formula (Cp-3):

(Cp-3)



in formula (Cp-3), * is a position bonding to the benzylidene group in formula (1),

in formula (Cp-3), $R^{15}$ represents a hydrogen atom or an alkyl, aryl, heterocyclic, amino, alkylamino, arylamino, heterocyclic amino, alkoxy, acylamino, alkoxycarbonylamino, ureido, alkoxycarbonyl, carbamoyl or cyano group, and $R^{16}$ represents a hydrogen atom or an alkyl or heterocyclic group.

9. (New) A hair dye composition of claim 8, wherein $R^1$ and $R^2$ in the dissociative direct dye (1) are each a hydrogen or halogen atom, or an alkyl, cyano, acylamino, ureido, alkoxycarbonylamino, aryloxycarbonylamino, sulfamoylamino, alkylsulfonylamino, arylsulfonylamino, alkoxycarbonyl, sulfamoyl or carbamoyl group.

10. (New) A hair dye composition of claim 1, wherein $R^3$ and $R^4$ in the dissociative direct dye (1) are each a hydrogen atom, a halogen atom, or an alkyl or acylamino group which may be substituted.

11. (New) A hair dye composition of claim 8, wherein X in the dissociative direct dye (1) is a hydroxyl group or $-NHSO_2R^5$, in which $R^5$ is an alkyl group which may be substituted.

12. (New) A hair dye composition of Claim 8, wherein A in the dissociative direct dye (1) is a group (which may have one or more substituents) selected from the groups represented by:

formula (Cp-3) in which $R^{15}$ is an alkyl, amino, alkylamino, arylamino, heterocyclic amino, alkoxy, acylamino, alkoxycarbonylamino, ureido, alkoxycarbonyl, carbamoyl or cyano group, and $R^{16}$ is a heterocyclic group.

13. (New) A hair dye composition of Claim 8, wherein A in the dissociative direct dye (1) is a group represented by formula (Cp-3).